



MARITAL RAPE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOCIAL NORMS

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Abstract

This study examines how legal consciousness and social norms shape societal views on marital rape. Legal ambiguity in many jurisdictions where marriage exemption still exists in rape definitions creates confusion about whether forced sex within marriage constitutes a crime. Strong patriarchal norms that demand wives obedience to husbands create immense pressure on victims to remain silent. Economic dependence on husbands and lack of social safety nets force victims to choose between personal safety and children survival. Young generations show positive shifts in awareness due to exposure to gender equality discourses through social media and internet. However this shift remains uneven because of unequal access to education and technology between urban rural areas and across socioeconomic groups. Comprehensive sex education in schools, law enforcement training, and community leader empowerment are key interventions. Legal reform without massive and sustained public awareness campaigns will insufficiently protect victims. Generational change through youth empowerment as change agents offers the most sustainable long term strategy.

Keywords: marital rape, legal consciousness, social norms, underreporting, generational shift

Introduction

Marriage in various legal traditions and cultures is often interpreted as a lawful union between a man and a woman accompanied by reciprocal rights and obligations. Understandings about what is permitted and prohibited in husband-wife relationships have shifted along with developments in human rights thinking. One of the most controversial areas is the issue of sexual relationships in marriage conducted without consent from one party. The concept of marital rape refers to forcing partners to engage in unwanted sexual relationships (Banerjee & Rao, 2022). Communities across different parts of the world have very diverse views about whether such actions can be categorized as crimes. Some legal systems explicitly exclude marital rape from criminal rape definitions. This exclusion is based on assumptions that by marrying, a woman implicitly gives permanent consent for sexual relationships whenever husbands desire. Legal dynamics related to women's and children's rights in family regulation systems often undergo transformations along with changes in existing social structures (Aliyah & Mardikaningsih, 2023). In managing these complexities, it is essential to consider the role of legal pluralism and traditional mediation, which often play a significant part in dispute settlements within multicultural societies (Futriyah et al., 2023). This assumption reflects patriarchal understandings of marriage as institutions granting ownership rights over wives' bodies. Such understandings begin receiving serious challenges from feminist movements and human rights advocates for several past decades.

Developing social norms in many communities still strongly influence perspectives toward marital rape. Communities tend considering sexual issues in marriage as private matters that should not be intervened by states or publics (Abhyankar, 2022). This view is strengthened by religious beliefs emphasizing wives' obligations to serve husbands in all matters including sexual needs. Wives rejecting husband invitations are often considered as disobedient women not fulfilling their duties. Consequently, when a wife experiences sexual violence from her own husband, she tends blaming herself rather than viewing her husband as a criminal perpetrator. Surrounding environments including families and neighbors also often pressure victims to remain silent and resolve issues internally. The importance of family support is very crucial in victims'

mental welfare because disharmony and unresolved dependencies can worsen violence impacts (Aliyah et al., 2022). Addressing these issues effectively requires accommodating social changes into sustainability policies to ensure a just and relevant society (Halizah & Mardikaningsih, 2022). Victims daring to report their husbands to authorities instead receive negative stigmas as women unable maintaining household integrity. This mindset creates environments very unfriendly for marital rape victims to speak and seek help. Social norm changes require very long timeframes because involving values rooted for generations.

Community legal awareness about marital rape shows significant imbalances between what is regulated in positive laws and what is understood by ordinary citizens. In many countries including Indonesia, criminal laws still do not firmly criminalize marital rape as separate criminal acts. The Book of Criminal Law Code still applicable in various former Dutch colony countries tends defining rape as sexual relationships outside marriage conducted with violence or threats. Consequences from this definition are that exactly identical actions if conducted by husbands toward lawful wives do not meet criminal elements (Khumairoh et al., 2024). Inconsistencies between positive laws and community legal awareness create confusing gray spaces. Some communities may consider those actions wrong morally but not illegal legally. Social and legal constellations in domestic violence victim protection efforts require deep sociological and juridical analyses for achieving justice (Saadi, Aliyah, & Mardikaningsih, 2024). This low legal awareness is exacerbated by minimal sexual education and legal education in schools. Young generations grow without adequate understandings about consent concepts in sexual relationships including in marriages. Consequently, ignorance cycles continue from one generation to subsequent generations.

Low reporting numbers of marital rape cases are not indications that this crime rarely occurs. Conversely, researchers and practitioners in violence against women fields believe marital rape is one of violence forms with the highest gray numbers (Indupalli & Giri, 2014). Victims choose not reporting their experiences because of various considerations very rational from their viewpoints. First, victims may not realize what they experience is sexual violence forms that can be reported. Family educations play important roles in building healthy relationships between parents and

children, which indirectly become foundations for preventing deviant behaviors in futures (Safira et al., 2024). Second, victims aware that those actions are wrong may not know where to report and how legal processes work. Third, victims may fear consequences of reporting husbands like losing livelihoods, being divorced, or losing child custody rights. Fourth, victims may have already tried reporting but rejected by law enforcement officers considering those matters trivial. Fifth, social pressures from extended families wanting victims to maintain marriages regardless of conditions become very strong hindering factors.

Current young generations show interesting awareness shifts about marital rape compared with previous generations. Exposures to gender equality discourses through social media and internet have changed their perspectives toward relationships in marriages. Many young people begin questioning legitimacy of claims that marriages provide automatic rights over partners' bodies. Concepts of explicit and continuous consent or approval begin being known and accepted among educated groups. Young generations are also more daring speaking about sexual violence experiences including those occurring in intimate relationships. Social movements like viral MeToo on social media have provided courage for victims sharing their stories. However, these awareness shifts are not uneven across all social layers because still very influenced by access to education and technology. Social stereotypes play big roles in shaping opportunity imbalances and interactions between community groups affecting perceptions toward educations and jobs (Sajjapong et al., 2022). Urbanization, while presenting challenges for social cohesion in city-based environments, also highlights the persistent struggle against social inequality (Mardikaningsih, 2021). Young people in rural areas or from families with low educational backgrounds may still hold traditional values about marriages. This generational gap creates complex dynamics in efforts changing community views overall.

Problems in handling marital rape are unclear legal statuses of such actions in many jurisdictions still adopting marriage exemptions in rape definitions (Abhyankar, 2022). This situation creates scenarios where women experiencing sexual violence from their husbands do not have equal justice access with women experiencing violence from others. Legal systems seem saying marriage relationships cancel women's rights over

their bodily integrity. This thinking contradicts basic human rights principles acknowledging everyone has rights over bodily autonomy without exceptions. Marital rape victims reporting to police often face responses that no laws are violated because perpetrators are lawful husbands. Some police officers even try mediating victims and perpetrators to reconcile without processing cases criminally. This mediation practice is very inappropriate because sexual violence is not ordinary household disputes that can be resolved through deliberations. In countries having abolished marriage exemptions, next challenges are still weak law enforcement. Criminal responsibility dilemmas in juridical studies also often occur with perpetrators having mental disorders, which often provide unique challenges for court systems (Vitrianingsih et al., 2025). In a broader economic context, it is vital to realize sustainability in public policy by building a balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions to prevent the rise of inequalities (Mardikaningsih & Hariani, 2021).

Other problems are strong social norms placing marriages as sacred institutions that cannot be contaminated by outside party interventions. Communities at various levels starting from families, neighbors, religious figures, to village officers tend viewing marital rape as internal matters that should best be resolved by husband-wife couples themselves. Interventions from outside like reporting to police are considered as actions shaming families and disrupting social harmony. This view is strengthened by cultural constructions about women as family honor guardians. If a wife reports her husband because of marital rape, then the wife is blamed because considered unable maintaining households well. Wives are also considered having tarnished husband and extended family names by publishing shames that should be covered. This silence pressure is very strong especially in communities still firmly holding collective values. Victims choosing to speak risk social isolation even ostracism from their communities. In some extreme cases, victims are instead expelled from houses by husbands' families because considered having brought problems. This perpetrator protection circle and victim judgment creates systematic injustices. Changing rooted social norms requires long-term interventions involving various stakeholders.

Marital rape victims experience traumas equally heavy as rape victims by strangers or even often heavier because perpetrators are people who should protect them. Depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide tendencies are several common psychological consequences (Victorio, 2023). Physically, marital rape can cause injuries in genital areas, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and other gynecological complications. Impacts of underage marriages have been concretely proven harming household welfare and reproductive health which often become initial gates of female vulnerabilities (Aliyah et al., 2023). Children witnessing their parents' sexual violence also experience traumas that can affect their psychological developments. Social costs from marital rape are very large including lost female productivity, increased health system burdens, and intergenerational trauma transmissions. Such systemic issues are often mirrored in broader consumption behavior trends, where social inequality and industrial dynamics further marginalize vulnerable populations (Gani et al., 2021). Effectiveness of adaptive learning both individually and collectively is greatly needed in educating communities to be able responding to violence issues more responsively (Kurniawan & Darmawan, 2021). Although impacts are very serious, this issue still receives less attention compared with other sexual violence forms. Systematic literature reviews are needed for mapping how far community understandings about marital rape exist and what factors influence their legal awareness. Results from these reviews will become bases for developing more effective education programs and policy advocacies. Without good understandings about social-cultural conditions underlying low reporting, designed interventions will lose targets.

The objective of this study is to explain the mechanisms through which public perceptions of marital rape are formed, influenced simultaneously by legal factors and socio-cultural factors. This explanation includes identifying which elements of social norms most strongly influence the low reporting rates of cases. This study also aims to map the shifting patterns of awareness among the younger generation as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder these shifts. The theoretical contribution of this study is the enrichment of sociology of law and gender studies literature regarding violence in intimate relationships. Its practical

contribution is in the form of policy recommendations for public education programs and the training of law enforcement officials.

Method

To trace the interconnections between legal awareness, social norms, and the practice of marital rape, this study applies a qualitative literature study approach. Monnin and Lê (2024) explain that library research aims to summarize knowledge already scattered across various written documents without collecting primary data through interviews or observations. The choice of this method is based on the consideration that the topic of marital rape has been extensively studied across diverse disciplines such as law, sociology, psychology, and gender studies. May and Perry (2022) argue that literature studies in social research allow for the identification of consistent patterns even when conducted across different cultural settings and legal systems. In this way, researchers can draw conclusions about universal factors that shape public perceptions of marital rape. The materials analyzed include criminal law textbooks, journal articles on domestic violence, research reports from women's organizations, and policy documents from international agencies such as the United Nations. Fleming and Kowalsky (2021) emphasize that the quality of a literature study is largely determined by the researcher's ability to compare findings from various sources that potentially have conflicting perspectives. The analysis procedure takes place in three sequential stages: document collection using selected keywords, data reduction based on criteria of recency and source reputation, and the presentation of synthesis in the form of a coherent argumentative narrative. Sridhar (2020) reminds us that literature studies have limitations as they depend on the availability of sources that may be biased toward specific perspectives.

Thematic content analysis was chosen as the primary technique for grouping statements from various sources into predetermined thematic categories. According to Greenfield and Greener (2016), thematic analysis in a literature study is useful for identifying areas of consensus as well as points of debate among authors regarding an issue. The four thematic categories established in this study are the definition and legal recognition of marital rape, socio-cultural factors influencing public perception, reporting barriers experienced by victims, and patterns of shifting

awareness across generations. Gunasena et al. (2024) state that the validity of a literature study's conclusions depends heavily on the transparency of source selection and the clarity of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for documents. Patten (2016) reminds of the need for a critical evaluation of the methodologies of the primary studies cited, as differences in research design quality can affect the reliability of the resulting findings. Dawson (2002) also emphasizes the importance of using sources from diverse disciplines so that the understanding of a complex phenomenon becomes more comprehensive. The criteria for source selection in this study include publication recency within the last fifteen years, the reputation of the publisher or journal, and a diversity of geographical and cultural perspectives. All collected documents were then analyzed repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the original authors' statements. The bibliography included at the end of this document contains all the references cited throughout the analysis process.

Result and Discussion

Community views toward marital rape are greatly influenced by social constructions about what is meant by lawful and ideal marriages. In many cultures, marriages are understood as social contracts where women give exclusive access over their bodies to husbands as returns for livelihoods and protection. This understanding is rooted in colonial and pre-colonial legal systems viewing wives as husband properties without own autonomy. This legal legacy is still felt in criminal law code articles defining rape as sexual relationships outside marriages. Logical consequences from this definition are that sexual relationships in marriages regardless of methods cannot be called rape. Communities living with this legal legacy tend having unclear legal awareness about marital rape. They may consider sexual violence actions by husbands as actions wrong morally but not illegal. This unclear legal status is exacerbated by lack of socializations about legal changes in countries having reformulated rape rules. Many citizens still live with old understandings that rape can only occur between people not bound by marriages (Adams-Clark & Chrisler, 2018). Efforts transforming women's protection from sexual violence are now beginning to direct toward legal reforms, patriarchy culture deconstructions, and more fundamental social changes (Rochman et al., 2024). Legal reforms

without following public awareness campaigns will not change community views significantly. Systematic efforts are needed for disseminating information about legal changes and reasons behind those changes.

Social norms about wives' obedience to husbands are the strongest hindering factors for marital rape victims reporting their experiences (Li, 2024). In societies adopting patriarchal systems, wives' disobedience toward husband desires is considered violations against natural orders established by God. Wives rejecting husband sexual invitations even with very rational reasons like being sick or tired are often labeled as disobedient women. This negative label is not only given by broad communities but also by close families including victims' own parents. Victims' parents tend blaming their daughters because considered unable serving husbands well. They even may push victims to remain in marriages for maintaining family names. This issue becomes more complex for career women having to face double burdens in social structures still gender-boxed (Khairi, 2021). In the context of multicultural societies, understanding cultural identity becomes key to building stronger social cohesion in order to overcome obstacles to social integration (Oluwatosin & Rojak, 2023). This silence pressure becomes stronger if victims and husbands already have children. Victims are reminded that reporting husbands means destroying their children's futures. Children will grow without father figures because fathers are imprisoned or without mothers because mothers are expelled from houses. Psychological burdens from this social pressure are often heavier than physical impacts from experienced sexual violence. Victims choose suffering in silence rather than facing more painful social ostracism.

Low marital rape case reporting is also caused by victims' ignorance about legal processes to follow and available support services (Abhyankar, 2022). Many women do not know that in some countries marital rape has been recognized as criminal acts with serious punishment threats (Sarfaraz, 2017). They also do not know there are legal aid institutions and civil society organizations willing supporting victims for free. Lack of access to this information especially occurs in rural areas and among women groups with low education. When victims try searching information, they often meet dead ends because village officers or local health officers also do not understand this issue well. Health workers at community health centers

may not be trained for identifying sexual violence signs in marriages. They may consider bruised injuries on patient bodies as normal things in household lives. Sector-level police also may not know correct marital rape case handling procedures. They may refuse making police reports with reasons that those cases are household matters. Whereas, legal protection for sexual violence victims in Indonesian criminal law perspectives should be firmly guaranteed for providing justice certainty (Pratama, Darmawan, & Saputra, 2022). Furthermore, transparency in policy management, such as the accountability of village fund management, is crucial to ensuring the welfare of rural populations who often have limited access to legal information (Rojak & Issalillah, 2022). This systemic ignorance creates vicious circles where victims do not report because knowing they will not be handled seriously. Breaking this circle requires systematic training for all officers potentially contacting victims.

Misinterpreted religious beliefs also contribute significantly to low critical community awareness about marital rape (Bavarsad, 2024). Some interpretations of sacred texts state wives do not have rights rejecting husband invitations for sexual relationships except in very limited conditions like menstruating or severely sick. These literal interpretations ignore basic principles of some religions about love, respect, and justice in husband-wife relationships. Religious figures in various communities often repeat wives' obligations to obey husbands without ever emphasizing husbands' obligations to treat wives with respect. Sermons in worship places rarely touch topics about importance of consent in sexual relationships in marriages. Consequently, congregations receive messages that sex in marriages is husband rights that cannot be rejected by wives. This message is then internalized into very strong beliefs because delivered with religious authority. Religious marital rape victims may feel guilty if thinking about reporting their husbands because considered opposing God's wills. They may instead increase prayers and fasting hoping husbands change without involving authorities. More balanced approaches in religious education emphasizing rights and obligations of both parties are greatly needed. Progressive religious figures need being encouraged vocalizing more just interpretations about sexual relationships in marriages. Striving for just sustainability through public policies that are responsive to social inequalities is a strategic step

in responding to the vulnerabilities of marginal groups within religious and social structures (Musyafak & Darmawan, 2025).

Economic factors become very rational considerations for marital rape victims deciding whether reporting their husbands or remaining silent (Lilley et al., 2023). Many women, especially those not working in formal sectors, depend completely on husbands for fulfilling daily needs (Akanle et al., 2020). Reporting husbands to police means risking losing main livelihoods because husbands may be detained or because household relationships become impossible to continue. Victims having children also think about how they will support their children if husbands no longer provide livelihoods. Jobs available for women with low education usually have small wages and do not provide social guarantees. Wages from jobs as house helpers or factory laborers may not be sufficient for paying house rents and children's school fees. This economic dependency is exacerbated by legal systems often not providing adequate livelihood rights to divorced wives. Courts may order husbands to pay child livelihoods but not for wife livelihoods. Victims then must choose between their own physical safety and their children's survival. This choice is very heavy because whatever victims choose will still bring painful consequences. Social protection policies like cash aid for domestic violence victims can reduce economic burdens trapping victims in violent relationships. The informal sector, where many women work, makes a significant contribution to welfare and employment, thus strengthening policies in this sector is essential to support their economic independence (Rojak & Putra, 2021). Work training programs and micro-finance access are also needed for economically empowering victims.

Young generations show significant awareness shifts compared with older generations in viewing marital rape. Exposures to gender equality discourses through social media and internet have changed how they understand intimate relationships. Consent concepts meaning explicit and continuous approvals begin being known and widely accepted. Young people learn that consent in sexual relationships must be given consciously, voluntarily, and can be withdrawn anytime. They also understand that marriage statuses do not eliminate needs for obtaining partner consent. These shifts are very visible among educated urban youth having internet access. They are more critical toward religious and

customary teachings considered unfair for women. Online social movements have provided spaces for young people sharing experiences and solidarity. They are also more daring questioning parent authorities and community figures perpetuating patriarchal values (Charles et al., 2022). These dynamics are broadly influenced by how social stereotypes shape inter-group relationships and create opportunity gaps and inequalities in communities (Zahid & Darmawan, 2022). In addition, racial discrimination and its impact on psychological well-being and social engagement are essential literature for understanding how stigma and coping strategies are formed in multicultural societies (Pakpahan et al., 2022). However, these shifts are not uneven because still very dependent on access to education and technology. Young people in rural areas or from families with low educational backgrounds may still hold traditional values about marriages. Digital gaps between cities and villages also cause information access differences about reproductive rights. Different communication strategies are needed for reaching young groups not yet exposed to gender equality discourses. Developing gender and ethnic diversity dynamics in contemporary organizations and communities also demand more inclusive new viewpoints (Rojak & Darmawan, 2012). Educational access inequality between urban and rural areas within the economic and policy framework must continue to be addressed so that every individual has equal opportunities (Rojak & Irfan, 2025).

Comprehensive sexual education in schools plays key roles in shaping young generations' awareness about marital rape. Good sexual education curriculums do not only teach biological reproduction aspects but also social, legal, and ethical aspects of sexual relationships. Students learn about importance of communication with partners, recognition toward personal boundaries, and rights to reject unwanted sexual activities. Sexual education also teaches students about available resources if they or their friends experience sexual violence. Unfortunately, sexual education remains taboo topics in many countries including Indonesia because considered contradicting religious and cultural values. Consequently, young people grow without adequate understandings about what is permissible and impermissible in intimate relationships. They learn from irresponsible sources like pornographic films or gossip from friends who are equally uninformed. This ignorance makes them

vulnerable to sexual exploitation including in marriages. Young women may enter marriages with beliefs that they must obey all husband sexual requests without ever questioning their rights. Comprehensive sexual education can instead prevent marital rape occurrences by equipping young generations with necessary knowledge and skills (Badriah et al., 2023). In broader scopes, juridical analyses regarding regulation dynamics and domestic violence victim protection in Indonesia continuously undergo updates for ensuring state presence in providing safety feelings (Mujito et al., 2025). Besides formal legal approaches, restorative justice approaches are now also viewed as strategic alternatives for handling domestic violence while prioritizing victim condition recovery (Suwito et al., 2025). A comparison between mediation and litigation in dispute resolution shows that the influence of culture on fairness and acceptability of outcomes is highly decisive for the success of conflict resolution in multicultural societies (Saputra et al., 2022). Research shows countries with good sexual education have lower sexual violence numbers.

Mass media and digital platforms have dual influences in shaping community awareness about marital rape (Hope et al., 2023). On one side, media can become very effective tools for increasing public awareness through case reporting and education campaigns. In-depth coverage about successful victim experiences can inspire other victims to speak. Television programs and podcasts discussing this topics with expert sources can reach wider audiences. Social media enables rapid and viral information dissemination so messages about victim rights can reach millions of people in short timeframes. On the other side, media can also perpetuate negative stigmas against victims through sensational and insensitive reporting. News headlines blaming victims or doubting victim credibility can make other victims reluctant reporting. Netizen comments judging victims on social media add psychological traumas already experienced by victims. Media also often ignore marital rape issues because considered less attractive compared with rapes by strangers. Whereas, marital rape victim numbers are estimated much larger but never reported. Regulations about victim-friendly reporting need being applied and enforced by press councils. Social media platforms also need strengthening their policies for removing content blaming sexual violence victims. Additionally, surveillance over legal

violation patterns in digital technologies is also important for ensuring fair responsibilities and proofs in cyber violence cases (Sutanto et al., 2023). Effective communication strategies in managing conflicts within multicultural teams can serve as a model for improving social interactions that are more responsive to these sensitive issues (Marsal & Darmawan, 2022). Collaborations between journalists, activists, and academics are needed for producing more responsible reporting. Furthermore, the dynamics of social capital that support inclusive community resilience and welfare are essential to address in mitigating broader social impacts (Rojak & Fajar, 2025). Psychological well-being and social interaction, through the reconstruction of social exchange theory in a cross-cultural perspective, also offer a path to improve the quality of life of residents, both in the context of smart city initiatives and rural life (Oluwatosin & Darmawan, 2024; Rojak, 2022; Rojak & Khayru, 2022).

Community figure roles including village heads, religious figures, and customary figures are very decisive in how communities respond to marital rape cases. In many communities, these figures have authorities greater than formal law enforcement officers (Tieleman & Uitermark, 2019). Communities tend bringing their problems to community figures first before considering legal paths (Rudolf, 2022). Community figure attitudes and responses toward victims coming seeking help will form precedents for subsequent cases. If community figures respond seriously, refer victims to support services, and give social sanctions to perpetrators, then communities will learn that marital rape cannot be tolerated. Conversely, if community figures belittle victim complaints and push for reconciliations without consequences for perpetrators, then the delivered message is that sexual violence in marriages is permitted. Sadly, many community figures still hold patriarchal values and lack understandings about sexual violence complexities. They may sincerely believe what husbands do are their rights as household heads. Violence dynamics in family environments often do not only impact couples but also have systemic impacts on family interactions that can disturb children's mental health and emotional balances (Safira, 2021). Systematic training for community figures about handling sexual violence victims is greatly needed. This training must include understandings about traumas, non-blaming victim interview techniques, and referral procedures to legal and

psychological services. Relevant ministries and civil society organizations need cooperating for conducting such training regularly.

Comparisons between countries having reformulated their rape laws show that legal changes alone are insufficient for changing community views (Chon & Clifford, 2021). Nordic countries having abolished marriage exemptions since the 1960s still struggle with low reporting levels until now. Surveys show many citizens in those countries still do not fully understand that marital rape is serious crimes (Abhyankar, 2022). Legal reforms must be followed with massive and continuous public awareness campaigns. These campaigns must use various communication channels including television, radio, print media, social media, and face-to-face activities in communities. Campaign messages must be adjusted with demographic characteristics of target audiences including ages, education levels, and cultural backgrounds. Using simple languages and concrete examples is very important for reaching common communities. Involving respected public figures like celebrities, athletes, or religious figures can increase message attractiveness and credibility. Campaigns must also target male groups because they are most likely to become marital rape perpetrators. Men need being educated about importance of consent and legal consequences of forcing partners. Education programs for prospective spouses mandating participants attend sessions about reproductive rights and violence prevention are also proven effective in some countries. Combinations of legal reforms, public campaigns, and formal education are the most effective policy packages.

Community legal awareness about marital rape is also influenced by their perceptions about criminal court system justice (Jackson, 2015). Victims seeing that sexual violence perpetrators are often given light verdicts or freedom will be reluctant reporting their cases. They feel that long and exhausting legal processes are not equivalent with results to be obtained. This perception is based on real experiences from many sexual violence cases reported by media. Judges often give verdicts far below prosecutor demands with reasons of compassion or considerations that perpetrators are family breadwinners. These light verdicts send signals that sexual violence is not considered serious crimes by legal systems. Perpetrators may not be deterred and even become more daring repeating their acts because knowing punishments are light. Therefore,

effectiveness of penalization systems in handling domestic violence perpetrators in Indonesia becomes very crucial to ensure for being able providing real deterrent effects (Mahendra et al., 2023). For changing this perception, commitments from all law enforcement officers starting from police, prosecutors, to judges are needed. Training about victim-perspective sexual violence case handling must be mandatory for all officers. Penalization guidelines giving high punishment ranges for marital rape perpetrators need being prepared and applied consistently. Judicial process transparency through fully published verdicts is also important for building public trust. Fair and predictable court systems will encourage more victims to report.

Young generations more aware about their rights have potentials becoming change agents driving broader social norm shifts. Young people exposed to gender equality discourses can become information sources for parents and other older family members (Anindya, 2022). They can initiate discussions at homes about issues long considered taboo including sexual violence in marriages. These discussions may feel awkward initially but over time can open parents' insights about injustices they never realized. In schools and campuses, young people can form discussion groups or advocacy clubs focusing on gender-based violence issues. These groups can conduct awareness campaigns, creating educational content on social media, or peer support for friends experiencing violence. Creative social media usage like making short videos, infographics, or informative Twitter threads can reach wider audiences. Young people can also participate in policy advocacy by writing letters to lawmakers or participating in online petitions for pushing legal reforms. Special attention must also be given to child violence dynamics in family environments, ensuring every action aligns with Islamic law principles and applicable child protection regulations (Safira & El-Yunusi, 2023). Empowering young generations as change agents is the most sustainable long-term investments. They will bring equality values into their own marriages and inherit them to their children. Thus, awareness changes do not only occur in one generation but continue across generations.

Conclusion

Marital rape is a phenomenon understood in highly diverse ways by society due to the complex interaction between colonial legal heritage, patriarchal social norms, unequal religious interpretations, and economic factors. Public views that tend to perceive marital rape as a private matter rather than a public crime lead to significantly low reporting rates. Public legal awareness remains blurred due to the unclear legal status of marital rape in many jurisdictions and a lack of socialization regarding legal changes. Social norms that place a wife's obedience to her husband as a noble value create immense pressure for victims to remain silent. Economic factors, such as financial dependency on the husband and the lack of a social safety net, force victims to choose between their personal safety and the survival of their children. The younger generation shows a positive shift in awareness due to exposure to gender equality discourse through social media and the internet. However, this shift is uneven due to gaps in access to education and technology between urban and rural areas, as well as between different socioeconomic groups. Comprehensive sexual education in schools, training for law enforcement officials, and the empowerment of community leaders are key interventions to change public perceptions. Legal reform, without being followed by massive and sustainable public awareness campaigns, will not be sufficient to protect victims of marital rape.

The implications of this study for policymakers are the necessity of removing the marital exemption from the definition of rape in the national criminal code. The suggestion for legislative bodies is to immediately revise articles that still differentiate between rape within marriage and outside of marriage. For executive agencies, it is recommended to integrate material regarding marital rape into the national education curriculum from the elementary to secondary school levels. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection needs to develop standardized training modules for law enforcement officials, health workers, and community leaders on handling victims of marital rape. For civil society organizations, it is suggested to strengthen legal and psychological assistance services for victims and to conduct policy advocacy at both local and national levels. Further research is required to quantitatively measure the prevalence of marital rape across various

regions and demographic groups. In-depth qualitative studies on the experiences of victims from diverse cultural backgrounds are also vital to understanding the nuances of the barriers they face. Collaboration between academics, practitioners, and policymakers in this research will produce recommendations that are more relevant to field needs. Periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of existing intervention programs must be conducted for continuous improvement.

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